



GENESIS 1-11, by Claus Westermann. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984. Pp. 636. \$29.95.

This is the commentary on Genesis that the English-speaking world has been waiting for ever since it first came out in German in 1974. We had an anticipation of where Westermann was going in his *Creation* (published in English in 1974). Now we have the full product, at least the first volume—chapters 12-36 are due to appear in 1985 and the rest in 1986.

Since this commentary is part of the *Biblischer Kommentar* series, it follows the format of that series. Each pericope is dealt with in terms of relevant literature, text (a new translation together with grammatical and text-critical notes), literary form, setting in life, commentary, and purpose and thrust. These sections are interspersed with excurses (word studies, history of exegesis, and various topics). Westermann's introductory section (73 pages) provides the methodological rationale for his approach, as well as summary thoughts on the theological significance of the primeval story. In his final chapter Westermann refocuses on methodology with proposed revisions of the documentary hypothesis, and gives a final theological assessment.

Westermann's principle of interpretation is that primeval events are to be separated qualitatively and radically from historical events (in Scripture or at present). What appears in the primeval story is suprahistorical, timeless, beyond history. "It is in this beyond, beyond all human experience, that there lies the event that is to explain the present situation" (535).

The implications of this approach show up on every page of the commentary. For one thing, that which informs the primeval story is the mass of prehistoric traditions which are common to all humanity. This shortcircuits all questions or discussion of whether and to what extent Israel was dependent on Mesopotamian or Egyptian traditions. Rather, the traditions involved (creation by various means, man's revolt, sibling and generational rivalry, flood, etc.) are all so widespread and elemental that looking only to one culture for background is misdirected and anachronistic. As Westermann documents those elemental traditions, he ranges far beyond the Near East to Africa, Europe, and Asia. J and P are thus inheritors of the common heritage of humanity, a scope as wide as that of the primeval story itself.

Secondly, this approach bypasses all questions about historicity. Questions about whether the flood was a local or a universal phenomenon or about the location of Eden or Ararat are irrelevant, because the events are primeval, suprahistorical, and elemental—though one could ask how such a tradition of destruction by flood (as opposed to fire or earthquake) came to be so widespread in the first place. At the same time, Westermann rules out as missing the point efforts to identify the persons of the primeval story with either historical persons or tribal groups, for instance, identifying the Cain tradition with the Kenites.

Yet another crucial implication is Westermann's complete rejection of the concept of "the Fall" in Genesis 3. Since the stories of Genesis 1-3 occur beyond time, it is improper to compare Adam and Eve before and after Genesis 3 or to inquire about what they might have lost in the Fall. Rather, Genesis 3 begins a cycle of crime-punishment stories, each of which is paradigmatic

of life as it is lived in history.

Indeed, the individual events of the primeval story stand not in a chronological relationship with each other, but in a complementary relationship, each illustrating yet another aspect of the pluses and minuses of life (blessing, rebellion against God, sibling rivalry, unfilial children, weakness, pain, domination,

etc.). These should not even be made to assume a “snowball” effect (against von Rad), but to stand as illustrative of life.

This view of the primeval story also affects one’s view of the role of J and P. In Westermann’s view, they originated nothing of the stories we have. They inherited and chose from the traditions common to humanity that came to them. Their contribution is in their linking these stories into one comprehensive story, and their binding of these stories to the Yahweh-faith of Israel in such away that the whole of Israel’s life is grounded in Yahweh’s universal lordship.

Westermann’s fundamental principles will need continued discussion. His radical separation of primeval from historical seems at times to impoverish the significance of both. For instance, is it enough to conclude from Genesis 4:26 (“then men began to call on the name of Yahweh”) that this is the beginning of the cult? Again, Westermann comments on the desire for a name in 11:4 that there is “no indication that the intention of making a name for oneself is reprehensible as such” (548). Yet only one chapter later is a significant comment on Yahweh’s giving a name that Westermann doesn’t even bring into the discussion. Indeed, the wider Biblical context seems often and unfortunately precluded by his approach.

While it is not completely valid to compare commentaries because each is written for different audiences at different points in history, comparisons can help put commentaries in a meaningful perspective. Westermann dialogs perhaps most often with von Rad. A comparison shows that von Rad’s commentary does indeed differ, not just in being briefer, but in its greater sensitivity to the wider Biblical context (Biblical theology) and also in its poetic and provocative style—by comparison Westermann’s is somewhat staid and heavy, though by no means boring. By contrast with both, Speiser’s commentary limits itself more closely to questions of philology and history. This leads to two conclusions. One is that Biblical interpretation is a communal task, and no one commentary (even Westermann’s) can render others obsolete. The other is that Westermann really has staked out a new path. He has given a new direction to methodology, and he has provided a model of exhaustive scholarship, theological sensitivity, and clarity of presentation. This book will reward the reader not just with Biblical knowledge and better informed preaching and teaching, but with a deepened theology—even if it comes in disagreeing with some of Westermann’s conclusions.

One final word must be said about the translation. Scullion spent three years on it, and has produced a beauty. Aside from the use of “apodictic” in contexts where casuistic seemed more correct and a translation of “evangelische” as Evangelical rather than Protestant, this translation reads as smoothly and easily as if Scullion were the author himself.

Henry Rowold
Concordia Seminary
Hong Kong

TEXTS OF TERROR, LITERARY-FEMINIST READINGS OF BIBLICAL NARRATIVES, by Phyllis Trible. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984. Pp. 144. \$7.95.

This is a book of sad stories. They are stories from Scripture, but ones we seldom hear. They are the stories of four women who are victims, women who are silent and silenced: Hagar, Tamar, the unnamed concubine of Judges 19, and the daughter of Jephthah. There are no happy endings here. The stories are allowed to speak for themselves with the skillful help of Phyllis Trible who exegetes them from a literary and rhetorical methodology, and out of a feminist perspective.

Trible is an effective user of literary criticism, a craft that allows texts to be opened in a way that other historical/critical methods cannot do. Literary criticism works with the final forms of whole stories. The stories are regarded as powerful, living things in which the “word does not return empty.” As Trible uses this method, it

involves an intrinsic reading of the text in its final form. The phrase “intrinsic reading” means wholly upon the text rather than wholly within the text...and the accent is upon the inseparability of form, content, and meaning; the rhetorical formation of sentences, episodes, and

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scenes as well as overall design and plot structure; and the portrayal of characters, most especially the violated women. (3-4)

This methodology also holds each word in high regard. Trible knows there is nothing accidental in the words of these texts, and the reader soon learns there is nothing accidental in Trible’s well-honed commentary.

All exegesis carries with it an interpretation, a perspective, and Trible’s perspective is feminist. She tells these stories *in memoriam* in order to offer compassionate readings on behalf of these women. Moving beyond historical and sociological documentation of the abuse and rejection of women, she seeks to use the data “poetically and theologically” (3). Trible

interprets stories of outrage on behalf of their female victims in order to recover a neglected history, to remember a past that the present embodies, and to pray that these terrors shall not come to pass again. In telling sad stories, a feminist hermeneutic seeks to redeem the time. (3)

Trible begins with the story of Hagar, and notes that in “light of contemporary issues and images, her story depicts oppression in three familiar forms: nationality, class, and sex” (27). Hagar is an Egyptian maid to a Hebrew mistress, and the conflict in which they are caught centers around the three men in their lives. Hagar is portrayed here as one who endures the “desolation of rejection” (9). She is abused and forsaken by both Sarah and Abraham; she is a woman never spoken to by name, a woman who seldom speaks. Yet, Hagar challenges our faith, and seeks to reshape it if we can hear her.

From Hagar we move to Tamar, who is raped by her brother Amnon. The text is

explicated clearly, and Tribble repeatedly shows us details of translation that can reorganize the text and its interpretation. For example, where the RSV says in 2 Sam. 13:1 that Amnon “loved” Tamar, Tribble shows that the Hebrew says Amnon “desired” her, leaving an ambiguity that could move toward either love or lust. We see Tamar try to reason with Amnon, telling him that he indeed could have her if he would be willing to go through the proper societal patterns. But controlled only by his desire, he rapes her. We must ask who will protect this sister from the smooth words of the rapist in the situations where Tamar lives on today.

The unnamed woman of Judges 19 is the third terror-ridden story of this book—the concubine who is abused and raped by a group of men from the city where she and her master are lodging for the night. She is tortured all night long, and the morning light finds her lying crumpled and beaten, “her hands at the threshold” of the house. When her master discovers her there, he speaks no words of compassion, nor does he attend to her. Rather, he commands, “Arise, let us be going.” Hearing no answer, he puts her on his donkey and sets out for home. Upon arrival, he takes his knife and dismembers her. She has been raped and tortured, and we do not know whether she is dead or alive, but he continues the brutality, and sends the twelve pieces of her body into all “the territory of Israel” (Judges 19:29). Here is a woman who is

alone in a world of men....She is property, object, tool, and literary device.
Without name, speech, or power, she has no friends to aid her in life or mourn her
in death. Passing her back and forth among themselves, the men of Israel have
obliterated her totally....Her body has been broken and given to many. (80-81)

Finally, Tribble considers the story that is perhaps the most poignant of all—the sacrifice of the daughter of Jephthah. Jephthah bargains with God in order to gain victory in battle. His only child, a young girl, becomes the victim of his vow to sacrifice whoever is first to greet him upon his return from war. When she comes out with timbrel and dance, his heart is broken. Yet, he blames *her* for bringing him calamity. The daughter accepts what has happened, acknowledging the word spoken to Yahweh. She then makes a bargain of her own, requesting to be with her female friends for several months, wandering the hills and lamenting her virginity. She faces Jephthah’s blame with remarkable strength, one that adds both to the tenderness and irony of the story. One senses that we, like the daughters of Israel, ought also to remember this woman and mourn her death.

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This study of four texts is to be highly commended for several reasons. We need new biblical scholarship such as this that challenges the *status quo*. We need a challenge to the history of interpretation and exegesis existing within the church, especially with regard to the role of women as they seek to recover that which has been lost to them. Tribble’s offering is deep in pathos and rich in insight.

Second, the book is valuable in its methodology, serving as a fine example of literary criticism, so we can see just *how* stories speak with power. The unity of structure and meaning in the biblical texts as well as in Tribble’s presentation is keenly elucidated.

Finally, the book cannot be read without our being moved to recognize that these stories do not just belong to the past. Tribble herself notes in her preface that

Choice and chance inspire my telling these particular tales; hearing a black woman describe herself as a daughter of Hagar outside the covenant; seeing an abused woman on the streets of New York with a sign, “My name is Tamar”; reading news reports of the dismembered body of a woman found in a trash can; attending worship services in memory of nameless women; and wrestling with the silence, absence, and opposition of God. All these experiences and others have led me to a land of terror from whose bourn no traveler returns unscarred. The journey is solitary and intense. (1-2)

We place high value on remembrance within our faith tradition, and we have here a call to remember the victims, the powerless ones. We also have a call to repentance—repentance for a cultural system, and repentance for our short, unwilling memories. First we must go to Scripture itself for the stories. Then, I suggest letting Tribble be our guide through the stories. It is a journey “solitary and intense” but well worth taking.

Stephanie Frey
Christ the King Lutheran Church
Mankato, Minnesota

REFORMATION OF CHURCH AND DOGMA (1300-1700) (Vol. IV of *The Christian Tradition. A History of the Development of Doctrine*), by Jaroslav Pelikan. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1984. Pp. 475. \$27.50.

More than the first three, this volume demonstrates both the weaknesses and strengths of Pelikan’s method of writing a history of doctrine, which is defined as “what the church of Jesus Christ believes, teaches, and confesses, on the basis of the word of God.” The authority of the word of God was indeed the basic issue at the time of the Reformation, the period covered in this volume.

Conceding that periodization is always somewhat arbitrary, Pelikan defines the Reformation as a movement lasting four centuries, beginning with the “doctrinal pluralism in the later Middle Ages” and ending with “confessional dogmatics in a divided Christendom.” He also states that the reformation of church and dogma started at the time of the death of Thomas Aquinas and of Bonaventure in 1274, and ended with the births of Johann Sebastian Bach and George Frideric Handel in 1685. Pelikan’s intention is to show how doctrine developed (or underdeveloped?) from the great medieval synthesis in the thirteenth century to the “age of orthodoxy” in the seventeenth century that ended in a “crisis of orthodoxy East and West” resulting from the struggle between religion and culture initiated by the Enlightenment.

Pelikan substantiates his basic thesis with masterful skill, chiseling a portrait of the development of doctrine from the immense quarry of four centuries of tradition. Chapter one delineates the features of an Augustinianism in which the doctrine of grace begins to triumph over the doctrine of the church. The result is a doctrinal pluralism culminating in doubts about the unity of the church. Chapter two portrays the authority of the one, holy, catholic, and apostolic church as against the authority of Scripture. Pelikan sees this tension embodied in the various late medieval Augustinian versions of apostolicity which eventually led to redefinitions of doctrine in the Reformation of the sixteenth century.

Chapters three and four are the centerpiece of Pelikan's work, depicting Luther and the consequences of his defense of "the gospel as the treasure of the church." Pelikan demonstrates that Luther's lack of specificity led to difficulties in interpreting the authority of the word of God. He uses conservative Lutherans, such as the Flacians, and liberal Calvinists, such as the Arminians, as well as radical, left wing reformers to substantiate the point that the Reformation wrestled with the relationship between the "word and the will of God." In this sense, the sixteenth-century reformers bequeathed to subsequent generations the problem of the relationship between justification and sanctification, between God's word for salvation and God's will for the world.

Chapter five depicts "the definition of Roman Catholic particularity," summarized in the Council of Trent (1545-1563). The point that much of Roman Catholic doctrine had to be defined later is well made, especially with regard to the relationship between doctrine and piety (*lex credendi et lex orandi*), evident in such issues as the doctrine of Mary's immaculate conception and papal infallibility. Chapter six describes the "challenges to apostolic continuity" on the part of radical, left wing reformers and their disciples. At issue are the teachings of Humanism, the relationship between spirit and structure, and the rise of anti-Trinitarian thought.

The final chapter presents an excellent summary and analysis of "confessional dogmatics" developed in the ages of Lutheran and Reformed Orthodoxy. Pelikan concludes by alerting the reader to three movements, which are still faintly related to the thought of Augustine but which already deal with the eighteenth-century relationship between religion and culture: Pietism, Puritanism, and Jansenism (the Roman Catholic revival of Augustine by Jesuits).

There is much meat in this volume, with its more than one thousand primary sources in the margins of each chapter and numerous secondary sources listed in the bibliography. Pelikan offers an erudite analysis of massive data and presents fascinating details. Lutherans are forcefully reminded that the reformers never viewed the authority of Scripture as "*sola*" but rather adhered to the authority of tradition, of which Scripture is the most significant part. The doctrine of justification is clearly portrayed as pointing to Christ and the dogma of the Trinity because Luther and Melancthon were totally committed to the authority of the Councils of Nicaea and Chalcedon. This may also be the first history of doctrine in which the radicals of the Reformation have been properly evaluated.

Some scholars will want to argue with Pelikan's total approach, as well as with his treatment of some details. But this volume is exemplary in its summation and analysis of doctrinal data. One only hopes that the fifth and final volume will appear soon, so that Pelikan's monumental work can be appreciated and assessed in its totality.

Eric W. Gritsch
Lutheran Theological Seminary
Gettysburg, Pennsylvania

AND THE TREES CLAP THEIR HANDS: FAITH, PERCEPTION, AND THE NEW PHYSICS, by Virginia Stem Owens. Grand Rapids; Eerdmans, 1983. Pp. ix + 143. \$6.95 (paper).

Committed to a mission to rediscover the physical world and God within it, Owens documents her ambition in *And the Trees Clap Their Hands*. In a poetic style reminiscent of the psalms, she celebrates the glories of creation and its maker, and calls others to join her in a “full embrace of the Incarnation.” In the course of the twelve untitled sections of the book, she chides those who think too little of the physical world, tells us a great deal about her own role in this endeavor and reviews some of the implications of recent physics for modern understanding.

The infidels against whom she writes are all those who have given up on matter and abandoned “the pursuit of God in the world’s flesh”: modern-day Manichees who are guilty of “de-carnating” the world, separating the holy from the material; contemporary Gnostics who deny the “democratic plenitude of our

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participation in reality”; and all pragmatists who settle for statistical probabilities instead of the real thing. Contrary to these Western heresies, Owens believes in things (“Give me phenomena and plenty of it”), the ready availability of knowledge about the world (“Reality radiates outward from any point at which consciousness touches it”), and incarnation (“Incarnation is not an abstraction, not some distant theological principle. It is reality itself—*Res*, things. Accessible to everyone. It starts with fragrant infants’ flesh, blood, breath, and tears, and radiates from that single point to include the whole world”).

Owens’ particular role in this campaign is to be a “spy,” indeed, one of “God’s spies” (Shakespeare). Others who “ransack the world for secrets” call themselves scientists or Sufis or swamis; Owens prefers the title, “spy.” Her purpose is to go about undetected, close on “the trail of the hidden God.” Her task is to see immediately and directly with the perspicacity and sharpness of the child. For this vocation she forgoes the world’s comforts though not its responsibilities. With steady attention, alert and singleminded, she excuses herself from “Herod’s feast” in order to sit at the “Messiah’s banquet.” She is “the true contemplative” whose ministry is “the recovery of sight to the blind.”

Though Owens believes Christianity has largely been on the side of the enemy, it does have the means “to appropriate new ways of figuring out the world.” The particular plan of her book is “to incorporate somehow the fresh data the new physics is offering.” This data includes work by Bohm and Bell which suggests the interconnectedness of all things. Einstein’s theory of relativity and unified field theory remind us of the importance of the observer and the unity of the cosmos. While quantum theory led to statistical descriptions of reality and the skepticism of the pragmatists, Heisenberg and Bell point to meaning in mystic experience and imagination, respectively. Einstein also restored order by undermining indeterminacy and statistical probability, and Max Planck split the world into subjective and objective truth in order to preserve things that cannot be proven.

To complete her mission, Owens marshals a variety of religious and literary forces. She marches under the orders of Jesus who calls all of us to see and hear. St. Paul, Augustine and Gregory of Nyssa fill her ranks and support her belief that God is in all things and the truth dwells within us. Less frequently cited allies are Michael Polanyi, Owen Barfield, C. S. Lewis and Annie Dillard. All these compatriots league together under Owens’ banner to bring her book to a grand climax that is both a hymnic celebration of God’s immanence and a call to all persons to join in the praise. The universe is a “sacramental loaf,” at once the embodiment of God who

“flows through the arteries of the world,” and also the body of Christ who “instructs waves about their function and buries knowledge in the heart of each photon.” Though all nature would praise God, it is a “logjam of unarticulated meaning,” leaving to humankind the task of speaking on behalf of muted matter. This praise points to the day when nature will be freed of its bondage and rejoice with all creation in a “eucharistic universe.”

Brimming with colorful images, this book is a beautifully stated upbeat theology of nature. Through Owens’ graphic style, the doctrines of creation, providence and the cosmic Christ become living, compelling realities. Owens even shows how Jesus’ crucifixion is rooted in and reflected by nature. Few authors so consistently and imaginatively present matter as God’s medium as Owens does in this book.

Those given to less elation over driftwood, snowflakes and human faces may sniff pantheism in these pages, or, at least, a disregard for the particular sacraments of the church. There may be too little said about the problem of evil and too much about the virtues of knowing. The three chapters devoted to the new physics may be too brief to be an integral part of the whole.

Nevertheless, the book is a worthwhile venture for those searching for ways to celebrate God’s immanence in the world. Owens is not a lone voice in this endeavor, but she is a voice with brilliant metaphoric resonance. Through the litany of her prose, she fulfills the very

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role she encourages for others, namely, to be a “choirmaster of creation.”

Jerry K. Robbins
Lutheran Campus Center
Morgantown, West Virginia

PRINCIPLES OF LUTHERAN THEOLOGY, by Carl E. Braaten. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. Pp. 156. \$8.95 (paper).

Carl Braaten calls this “the only specifically Lutheran book I have ever attempted” (xii). It bears both trademarks: it is indeed specifically Lutheran, vintage Braaten confessionalism. And it is a first attempt, not always successful. This surfaces most clearly as he attempts to read the Lutheran confessional heritage through his modified Pannenbergian eschatological lenses. Even his improved Pannenberg perspective is still sometimes fuzzy on law, faith, and the promise, clearly cardinal Lutheran themes.

He proposes seven “principles of interpretation” for what’s Lutheran. After reporting on them from their original 16th century context, he brings them up to the present. With the last five he offers a consciously eschatological rewording for Lutheranism today. And here the strengths and the weaknesses of the Pannenberg tradition surface.

The principles are as follows: 1. Canonical Principle: Christ is the canon within the canon; 2. Confessional Principle: justification by faith alone is the center of the Gospel; 3. Ecumenical Principle: Sufficient for enacting church unity is consensus about the Christ and the faith that justifies; 4. Christocentric Principle: the criterion for any salvation proposal is the necessity of Jesus’ cross and resurrection; 5. Sacramental Principle: created things are indeed bearers of divine reality; 6. Law/Gospel Principle: salvation is only by grace, not by performance;

7. Two-Kingdoms Principle: the two modes of divine activity in our one world are to be rightly distinguished so they may then be properly rejoined.

One of the most powerful eschatological rewordings is the Ecumenical Principle. The *satis est* of Augsburg VII in Braaten's rewording is "the sufficiency of God's grace and the unfailing power of his promises [to] point forward to an eschatological future which radicalizes, the relativity of the church in history." This power is "the power of the cross that levels...all...in the church, so that all may become servants...none lording it over the rest" (61).

Less fortuitous is his re-visioning of the Christological Principle (necessitating Christ). He makes a winsome case for universal salvation at the end of history, not because Buddhists are Christ-like, but because that is "what is announced apostolically" about Christ's cross and resurrection. The *sola fide*, however, does not enter his discussion. Yet as the Confessional Principle he states his own "personal conviction" that "justification by faith alone as is defined by the confessions...is still an essential control-formula of dogmatics" (39). That control-formula then must be applied to universalism—Braaten's variety or any other. Especially for a chapter on the *solus Christus* principle in Lutheranism the *sola fide* should be acknowledged as its flipside. Lutherans have to talk about both when they affirm either one. Where is *sola fide* in this proposal for universalism?

That opens the door to the less-than-Lutheran thread in this otherwise boldly Lutheran book: the category of revelation dominates Braaten's proposed Lutheran rewordings for today. When he is reporting the 16th century confessional roots he hardly ever uses the term revelation. No wonder, back there they didn't either. His revelationism borrows too heavily from Pannenberg who borrowed too heavily from Barth in his explicit critique of Lutheran theology. In the final chapter he talks about "the two modes of divine activity" (134) in the world. But in the very chapter where you would expect it (#6 on Law and Gospel) this arch Lutheran principle is not in the picture. Where we should be hearing about the two modes of God's revelation (or the Scripture's "two traditions" as Melancthon says, Apology IV), namely, law and promise, Braaten gives us Barth's case for grace. God is by definition grace-full toward sinners. Humans hooked on legalist religiosity need to encounter the revelation that *sola gratia* is the good news.

Christ is, of course, the ultimate revealer, but God is grace-full to sinners even so. Small wonder that Christ is not even mentioned in this *sola gratia* section until way at the end, and then not "necessarily" so (counter to principle #4). Rather the cross of Christ "declares" divine monergism and is "judgment" on all legalistic synergisms.

Braaten seems to follow Barth in putting both Law and Gospel under the overarching rubric of revelation (God-action in contrast to human-action), and making grace out of both of them. Yet even that might get assent from the Lutheran confessors *if* one would distinguish between the two modes of God's grace in the world, the grace-that-obligates and the grace-that-liberates from those very grace-grounded obligations. Luther does this ingeniously in his explanation of the first and second articles of the Creed in the Small Catechism. One is the "grace" of creation and God's law ("divine goodness and mercy") that bestows fantastic gifts, but gifts that obligate, that leave me "schuldig" (as the original reads). The other is the costly grace of the crucified and risen Messiah, clean contrary to the first grace. To put them both under revelation as a unifying category is to say that fire and water are similar because both of them are in my house.

The final chapter on the Two Kingdoms begins by remembering what the law/ gospel chapter forgot, viz., God's two modes of operating. Braaten does a marvelous rehabilitation of the two kingdoms from the bad press Lutherans themselves have given them in the post-Reformation centuries. But then as he proposes his own eschatological reformulation for today, he forgets what he just told us. He makes eschatology the equalizer between the two kingdoms, just as he made Barth's notion of grace equalize law and gospel.

Of course in Christ's cross and resurrection we have a prolepsis of where God is going to bring world history. But that does not come by merging the two kingdoms. That grand finale is the cessation of one of God's two modes of activity (the left-hand regime) and the final and total overruling by the reign of God in Christ.

This really is not Braaten's first Lutheran book. It is another bead on the string of his lifelong career of going public with Lutheran theology. This may be the first time he has admitted it. All co-confessionalists, this reviewer included, are his beneficiaries. For even when he's wrong he keeps the confessing movement going.

Edward H. Schroeder
The Crossings Community
St. Louis, Missouri

THE ROOTS OF ANTI-SEMITISM IN THE AGE OF THE RENAISSANCE AND REFORMATION, by Heiko A. Oberman. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1984. Pp. 160. \$13.95.

This book has its origin in the celebration of Martin Luther's 500th birthday, an event itself which gave priority to the question of "Luther and the Jews." Oberman's work in this area has led him to see the crucial importance of the "total picture" for proper understanding of Luther's views and writings on the Jews.

Oberman convincingly shows that the 16th century simply accepted with little or no critique the medieval anti-Jewish polemic. In spite of the fact that the 16th century is often called "the Age of Toleration," this spirit of toleration had little, if any, effect upon attitudes toward Judaism. Toleration was applied by Christians to other Christians.

Oberman examines the views of the three so-called champions of liberty in the sixteenth century: Johannes Reuchlin, Erasmus of Rotterdam, and Martin Luther. Reuchlin, the great champion of the Jews, is shown to be less concerned with the Jews and more concerned with their books, their mystical knowledge, and their conversion. Erasmus, the great humanist, is shown to have a deep-rooted anti-Judaism, summed up in his phrase, "If to hate the Jews is the proof of genuine Christians, then we are all excellent Christians" (40). Luther, the author of "On Christian Liberty," yet generally believed to be a German bigot and forerunner of Nazism, is presented as a product of his times in his anti-Jewish polemic. Luther is also influenced by an apocalyptic world-view that has far-reaching con-

sequences for all aspects of his theology, particularly with respect to his views on the Jews. Oberman's most provocative statement is that "the Jewish question does not occupy a dark corner in Luther's work, but a central place in his theology" (94).

Fully one-third of the book is devoted to Luther. In addition, other 16th-century figures are examined: Johannes Eck, Justus Jonas, Johannes Pfefferkorn, and Andreas Osiander. While Oberman treats the topic in a broad manner, he fails to give detailed textual examination to any of his subjects. Even Luther, of whom it is said that Jews are central to his theology, is examined only with respect to some of his major commentaries and his *Judenschriften*. This is not necessarily a criticism of Oberman's book. Oberman is concerned to give a broad historical perspective, and at that he admirably succeeds. It must be left to others to examine all the humanists and reformers at a closer level.

The entire book is well-documented. The translation by James Porter is an improvement over the German original, for it includes indexes of names, places, subjects, modern authors, and an index of Weimar citations. As in the original edition, useful biographies of the main people are included.

Anyone desiring to study the problem of sixteenth-century Jewish/Christian non-relations will want to begin with this book.

Kenneth Hagen
Marquette University
Milwaukee, Wisconsin

JOB AND JONAH: QUESTIONING THE HIDDEN GOD, by Bruce Vawter. Ramsey, NJ: Paulist, 1983. Pp. 126. \$4.95 (paper).

In this brief book we are given a "rereading" of two books of the Hebrew Scriptures in the inimitable style that is familiar to those who have read Bruce Vawter before. By an interspersing of text and commentary/interpretation, the reader is led through both books in a way which highlights both the issues and possibilities in these writings. Unapologetically Vawter gives us his reading of the text, often informed by and in distinction from other readings, though that is not a primary concern. His stance in regard to these two biblical books is that they represent "minority reports filed against the dominant religious orthodoxy of a tiny ethnic community" (1), one a "repudiation of the claims of wisdom" and the other a "parody of prophecy" (23).

To support this reading of Job and Jonah Vawter begins with a chapter entitled "Without Man There is No God" in which he sets forth his understanding of Scripture as the human word which aims to speak about God and wrestles with the question of the ways of God in a seemingly absurd human world. The second chapter, "A Best and Worst of Worlds," describes but does not argue for Vawter's view of the historical context for the authors of Job and Jonah.

In six chapters Vawter gives us his interpretation of Job. Beginning with "The Legend of the Patient Job" he points to the distinction between the Job of the narrative and the Job of the dialogues, noting their original distinction but taking cognizance of how the "author" has put them together to make the point discerned in the book. Then in "In Search of the Real Job" it is held that it is the "poetic Job" who is of primary interest to the person with religious questions. In this chapter and the next the dialogues of Job are expounded and set into context, recognizing that the questioning of Job has never been answered. The last three chapters on Job sketch the nature of wisdom in the ancient near East and Israel, a drive for a rational and moral understanding of God. The book of Job shows that such a search is a "dead end."

In the final four chapters Vawter shows how prophecy is also turned up-side down by the irony and satire of the author of the book of Jonah. Chapter 2 of Jonah, the Psalm, is seen not as an intrusion but “an integral part of his sardonic reflection” (101). The point of Jonah is seen in the last two verses of the book with God’s “whimsical thrust” expressed in the question asked of Jonah.

Here is a very helpful study of two biblical books which appeal to many

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readers. With Vawter’s own translations of the text and the interspersed commentary one is led to understandings which can “make sense” of the biblical text. These brief chapters could well be used in adult Bible studies in the local church. In careful and understandable prose Vawter expresses his reading of the text, one that lies in the mainstream of biblical scholarship. One might wish that his use of language were as careful; he tends to use “man” and “men” in a generic sense.

Arthur L. Merri11
United Theological Seminary of the Twin Cities
New Brighton, Minnesota

MARTIN—GOD’S COURT JESTER, by Eric W. Gritsch. Philadelphia: Fortress, 1983. Pp. 304. \$14.95 (paper).

I must tip my hat to Eric W. Gritsch for undertaking such a formidable task as this book represents. Professor Gritsch skillfully and successfully weaves a retrospective view of Martin Luther and his teachings with a futuristic glance towards ecumenism. This book is a valuable resource to both the novice and the serious Luther scholar. To the novice, it provides a good introduction to Martin Luther and a clear picture of his theology and teachings. To the more serious scholar, it provides a complete portrait of Luther. This book brings together both the history and thought that shaped Luther and the history and theology that was shaped by Luther. The author is both careful and skillful in his presentation so as not to overload the novice nor bore the serious scholar.

Professor Gritsch utilizes a three part format in his biography of Luther. Part one is a historical profile that traces Luther’s life from his childhood, through his years as an Augustinian friar, to the position of leadership in a reformation movement that shook the Roman Catholic Church. Here is a realistic look at a man living in a medieval society beset by the trials and tribulations of his day. The image of Luther that emerges is a helpful one because it places Luther in the times in which he lived and which he addressed in his preaching and teaching.

Professor Gritsch entitles the thoughtful and engaging second part of his book *Neuralgic Heritage*. In this section he lets the thoughts and teachings of Luther live by placing his theology within the contexts of specific events and issues of his day. It is in these chapters that Gritsch points to the real matters of contention between Luther and his adversaries. This section also contains a sophisticated discussion of Luther’s theology of two kingdoms including the role of secular governments and the right to resist human authority.

No competent biography of Luther could avoid Luther’s shocking statements concerning

the Jews from his closing years. Gritsch addresses this issue directly and comes to a sobering and realistic conclusion:

Luther was very much the son of medieval Christendom with its fear of religious pluralism and its cruel means of preserving cultural uniformity. Despite pioneering theological insights into the universality of God's love in Christ, Luther turned the 'good news' into 'bad news' for the Jews. (145)

The second part of this biography closes with a chronological table comparing the state of Luther's health with his literary accomplishments. Possibly herein lies a clue to the uncharacteristic legalism that Luther appears to use in regard to the Jews in his later years. It is indeed extraordinary that despite all of his physical ailments as well as the normal hazards of sixteenth century living, Luther completed what can only be considered an astonishing amount of work.

The emphasis of the third and final section of Gritsch's biography on Martin Luther is summed up in its title, *Ecumenical Legacy*. Gritsch examines the influence and application of Lutheran stances on justification by faith, the authority of scripture, the proper use of the sacraments, and the theology of the cross. Luther viewed the church not as a static institution, but rather as a continual event, an interim embodiment between Christ's ascension to the right hand of God and His second coming. Gritsch sums up the implications of such a view

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of the church for today's dialogue between denominations:

Such thinking can affect the question of ecclesiastical authority today. If the gospel makes things happen between people, then the doors between various Christian groups must be kept open; it should be possible to share authority, including the magisterial or teaching authority. On the one hand, this is much easier today than it was in Luther's day, since the world has experienced a communication explosion. On the other hand, there is such great religious diversity in the modern world that it has become quite difficult for anyone Christian community to relate to others. (189)

The final section of this biography of Martin Luther centers on the ecumenical nature of Luther's view of the universal catholic church.

I found Gritsch to be both engaging and entertaining in his biography of Luther. This book is written in such a manner that it could be used effectively in either lay study groups or as a source of information for individual scholars.

Kevin J. Forquer
Our Savior's Lutheran Church
Salem, Oregon

MIRACLE IN THE EARLY CHRISTIAN WORLD: A STUDY IN SOCIO-HISTORICAL

METHOD, by Howard C. Kee. New Haven: Yale, 1983. Pp. 332. \$22.50.

To students and teachers of the New Testament the name Howard Kee is a familiar one. Kee has made many distinctive contributions to New Testament studies and Christian origins. *Miracle in the Early Christian World* is clearly one more.

This book has two aims. First to

propose a historical method which more faithfully portrays and interprets religious phenomena in their original setting and which seeks to develop safeguards against imposing modern categories on ancient data (1)

and, secondly, to add “concreteness” (1) to the first aim by investigating a particular phenomenon, widespread in the ancient world and during the rise of Christianity, namely, that of miracle.

In the opening chapter, Kee traces “The Decline and Fall of the History-of-Religions Method.” He demonstrates here, and at various points throughout the book, serious flaws in the traditional history-of-religions approach, which he maintains oversimplifies historical and interpretive judgements on the basis of broad generalizations. He notes further methodological flaws to be the temptation to impose contemporary presuppositions and notions upon ancient material; the reduction of a religious phenomenon to a moral, ethical or existential truth (“an antecedently arrived-at reductionistic essence,” 41); and a comparative method by which the development of Christianity is accounted for merely by noting parallels in other religions. Kee argues for a more responsible historical method that overcomes what, in his view, has been a far too limited understanding of the social context of a document or the event recorded therein.

This method insists that the essential requirement for interpretation of a text is to read it in context; not merely in literary context, but in the wider, deeper social and cultural context in which both author and audiences lived, and in which the language they employed took on the connotations to which the interpreter must seek to be sensitive. (3)

This wider and deeper social and cultural context is what the author refers to as “the life-world” of a given community, author and audience.

Kee demonstrates his method by examining in chapters three through eight the phenomenon of miracle in the ancient cults of Asklepios and Isis and in the apocalyptic tradition. In the Jewish apocalyptic tradition and the communities of “Q,” Mark, and Paul, miracle is primarily the sign of the dawning of a new age and the triumph of God.

Paul discusses miracle in particular in the context of charismatic gifts. The most prized of gifts, in keeping with his “apocalyptic life-world” (172), is prophecy; such prophetic powers “for him

meant to understand mysteries and to possess the knowledge of God’s eschatological purposes” (171). For Matthew, miracle is seen not as a sign of the new age breaking into the present as with

Mark or “Q” but as confirming Jesus’ authority and his interpretation of the law. Luke portrays miracles as helping to fulfill God’s grand purpose for the cosmos. These miracles demonstrate that God is in control of the creation (203) and that his divinely-willed purpose is being worked out. Miracle is also viewed in Luke-Acts as a sign of divine communication and confirmation. For John, miracle has a symbolic and almost mystical quality. “Miracle becomes a medium by which people of faith can experience the transcendent in their midst” (241). This same symbolic and mythical use of miracle occurs in Philo and Plutarch as well. Finally, miracle serves the purpose of “propaganda” in pagan and Christian romances. Here miracles occur primarily as divine confirmations of the claims made on behalf of a particular god, goddess or hero. There is also a fascinating section on “discrediting miracle-workers” with attention paid to Lucian, Celsus and Eusebius. Kee concludes with a chapter and a lively excursus on the “Divine Man.”

This book makes a significant contribution to the intriguing subject of miracle in the ancient world, both Christian and pagan. The tracing of the transformation and evolution of the meaning of miracle in diverse and varied social and cultural contexts across the early Christian world is masterfully accomplished. It becomes clear that the meaning and function of miracle differs from context to context, and the specifics surrounding a particular miraculous event are directly correlated with “the life-world” of the writer and the audience addressed (293).

Perhaps more significantly, this book makes an important contribution as a methodological corrective for the historical study of religion. The author has called for and demonstrated a responsible method for historical interpretation and reconstruction that reflects great sensitivity to the “life-world” or the social and cultural context in question. Kee pushes us toward greater clarity and precision in our socio-historical analysis of early Christianity and its context(s).

J. Andrew Overman
Colonial Church of Edina
Edina, Minnesota

HOPE AND SUFFERING, by Desmond Tutu. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1984. Pp. 189. \$10.95.

There is nothing more convincing than an encounter with the reality itself. All Americans have heard of the apartheid system of South Africa. Apartheid is an Afrikaans word which means “segregation,” segregation of people by law according to their color of skin. The policy of apartheid is imposed and enforced on the majority of the South African people. It is not only maintained constitutionally, but also by military orders, and defended with biblical passages as “ordained” by the almighty God who created Adam and Eve at the beginning of creation. Apartheid is designed as a final solution by the South African white minority to remove the black majority of South Africa and Namibia from the so-called white areas. Apartheid South Africa can only be compared with the Nazi Germany’s treatment of the Jews.

Hope and Suffering is a book which protests the hell of apartheid on the basis of Tutu’s own experiences. For the many people who continue to seek information with regard to the South African situation, this is a book written with the sensitivity of a caring heart. This is a unique book in human history. It is a book written to all people irrespective of their color, sex, age, occupation, creed or political affiliations, a book meant to address the powers and principalities of the world on behalf of the oppressed and the voiceless. Indeed, a book written to fit all spheres

of life. For Tutu, hope does not only have to do with the future, but mainly with the here and now. Hope for Tutu involves respect for all people, security now, and a sense of life today. Hope and security come when people count as of equal worth. “Neither the most sophisticated arsenal nor the best army or police force will give White South Africa true security,

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for that will come and come automatically when all of us, Black and White, know we count as of equal worth in the land of our birth, which we love with a passionate love,” he says.

Hope and Suffering is a book written from experience with the rule of tyranny in South Africa. It is one person’s work, but it is the stand of the majority. For surely the majority of the South African and Namibian Christians share the same beliefs and feelings portrayed in this book. It is an amazing hope which has kept the Southern Africa Black majority alive under sufferings and injustices since the Whites came to Africa. But today this hope is getting impatient. It is becoming too long to wait for the dawn of justice and peaceful changes. Tutu says: “It is a miracle of God’s grace that Blacks can still say they are committed to a ministry of justice and reconciliation....Those of us who still speak ‘peace’ and ‘reconciliation’ belong to a rapidly diminishing minority.” This has become a situation that needs a drastic step of healing. The USA in particular is heavily supporting the status quo of injustice, oppression, evil, and immorality of the apartheid system. The Reagan and Carter administrations are viewed in *Hope and Suffering* with different eyes. The “constructive engagement” policy of the Reagan administration is seen as unjust, oppressive, evil, and immoral because it fails to address apartheid in full force and in sincerity. There can be no impartiality in the situation of injustice. To be impartial in such a situation means supporting the status quo.

Hope and Suffering shows the spiritual and theological depth of Bishop Tutu. He demonstrates that a Christian is not receiving his/her command from Washington or Moscow, but from Galilee. In other words, in matters of Christian witness to the truth and justice, one is totally committed to obedience to God rather than to the people. Tutu also knows that Christian witness involves suffering and anguish. This is not foreign to Christ’s disciples because “Jesus did not promise His followers a bed of roses,” he says, but suffering “is part of the divine economy of salvation.”

The ethics of Desmond Tutu is Scripture-based and governed by the divine intention. To him there is no government designed by human beings which would be able to stop him from being involved in what he believes to be what God wants him to do. “I do it because I am under what I believe to be the influence of God’s hand. I cannot help it: when I see injustice I cannot keep quiet...when I have tried to keep quiet, God’s word burns like a fire in my breast. But what is it that they can ultimately do? The most awful thing that they can do is to kill me, and death is not the worst thing that could happen to a Christian,” Tutu says. This book, *Hope and Suffering*, is scholarly and up to date, theologically sound, spiritually deep, politically helpful. It is worth reading, moving and prophetic. The author is under oppressions and sufferings, but spiritually free and hopeful. Therefore the name, *Hope and Suffering*, is appropriate. Don’t miss this book no matter what your social position might be. Read it and utilize it!

Shekutaamba Nambala

St. Paul, Minnesota (Namibia)

THE NATURE OF DOCTRINE: RELIGION AND THEOLOGY IN A POSTLIBERAL AGE, by George A. Lindbeck. Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984. Pp. 142. \$16.95; \$9.95 (paper).

On rare occasions, a book consolidates a major school of thought on critical issues facing an intellectual discipline. This book is such rare occasion. As a gathered position it reflects, at least to the greatest extent to date, the work of several Yale scholars and many of their students. In terms of published works this conversation includes Lindbeck's colleagues David Kelsey, Hans Frei, Paul Holmer, Aidan Kavanagh, and Brevard Childs, among others. Understand, while the book reflects a kindred spirit with these colleagues' work, it is thoroughly Lindbeck's book reflecting his training as a historian and his experience in ecumenical dialogues between Lutherans and

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other Christians. In addition, Lindbeck synthesizes philosophical linguistic analysis and the anthropological work of Clifford Geertz for his conception of religion and culture. It is, then, a major and important work which should receive the most serious response from academia, church, and other persons interested in the nature of doctrine and a general theory of religion. We owe Lindbeck great thanks for this work. My brief comments fall into two major parts: first, a description of Lindbeck's proposal and its strengths; second, a question regarding the proposal.

Lindbeck proposes a general theory of religion which understands doctrine on the basis of a profound linguistic and cultural relativism. In drawing his argument Lindbeck describes three models of religion and doctrine: (1) "cognitive-propositionalist," (2) "experiential-expressive" and (3) "cultural-linguistic." He holds the cultural-linguistic account of religion and doctrine.

According to Lindbeck, the cognitive-propositionalist approach is the classical model for understanding doctrines. These doctrines are seen as propositions which refer to historical and metaphysical realities. These propositions are subject to public truth claims before any reasonable audience. The experiential-expressive model steps back from this kind of claim to truth. Instead, it argues that different religions are diverse expressions of a common core of religious experience. Doctrines are expressive symbols of this experience. Lindbeck's cultural-linguistic proposal places emphasis "on those respects in which religions resemble languages together with their correlative forms of life and are thus similar to cultures" (33). The predominate function of church doctrines in this perspective is their use, not as expressive symbols or as truth claims, but as "communally authoritative rules of discourse, attitude, and action" (34). Doctrines neither refer to realities, nor express a common religious experience, external to language; instead, they are rules for enacting a cultural-linguistic system.

In the fifth chapter, he tests his model for ecumenical usefulness on three doctrines: Christological (and Trinitarian) affirmations, the irreversibility of doctrinal developments regarding Mary, and the infallibility of the teaching office. Lindbeck reconceptualizes Nicaea and Chalcedon by distinguishing between doctrines, on the one hand, and the terminology and conceptuality in which they are formulated, on the other. The christological statements of Nicaea and Chalcedon are second order guidelines for Christian discourse rather than first order affirmation about the inner being of God or of Jesus Christ. They are primarily concerned with the rules of grammar for articulating the Christian language game and lifestyle. He isolates three

such regulative principles present at these ecumenical councils: “First,...the monotheistic principle...Second, the principle of historical specificity...[third]... the principle of Christological maximalism” (94).

Although I have significant reservations regarding Lindbeck’s proposal, some of which I discuss below, he has rendered a great service to theological reflection in general by providing a relatively clear and simple means of understanding the role of classical doctrine in the construction of contemporary theology. For example, the guiding principle of historical particularity established at these councils does not necessitate Pannenberg’s attempt to base theology on history but does discourage christologies which cannot account for and incorporate the historical particularities of Jesus of Nazareth. In contrast to Pannenberg, Schillebeeckx’s christological project does not ground christology in the fate and ministry of Jesus but it incorporates these at crucial stages of the project. Historical particularity is not sufficient, nor the sole norm or vantage point; it is, nonetheless, necessary.

The proposal not only provides rules for doing theology within a particular religion but also accounts for other religions on the same basis, as cultural-linguistic systems. If becoming Christian is gaining competence in the Christian cultural-linguistic system, becoming Buddhist implies the same kind of process. The particularly religious aspect is “a system of discursive and nondiscursive symbols linking motivation and action and providing an ultimate legitimation for basic patterns of thought, feeling, and behavior uniquely characteristic of a

given community or society and its members” (62). With this definition and understanding of religion in hand, he is able to delineate a highly empirical and public process for the study and comparison of religions—so public, in fact, that even nonbelievers can research a religion’s basic doctrines or guiding principles. Of course, the analysis, because of the relativist assumptions, must hold the ontological truth claims neutral.

Lindbeck believes the major alternative to his proposal is the experiential-expressive model. The principal difference between this model and Lindbeck’s is the conception of the relationship between language and experience. The cultural-linguist’s conception is the inversion of the experiential-expressivist’s. For Lindbeck, the humanly real is not “constructed from below upward or from the inner to the outer, but from the outer to the inner, and from above downward.” The “heights and depths of human knowledge, faith, and love are the effects and not the causes of” cultural-linguistic competence (62).

The contrast between the experiential-expressive and cultural-linguistic proposals, stated in an overly simplified manner, is as follows. If the former were to meet a Zen Buddhist, who was unimpressed with the Christian claims regarding Jesus as Lord and Messiah, she would most likely begin the conversation by appealing to some allegedly shared depth-religious experience. The experiential-expressivist would do so in hopes of finding common ground for shared work. Some individual experiential-expressivists, upon finding such common ground, might declare the Zen Buddhist an anonymous Christian. The cultural-linguist would find such a suggestion nonsense. The Buddhist, unless exposed to latent Christianity by being reared in a Christian society, would find the claims of Jesus being Lord and Messiah nonsense. The only way these two conversation partners in the cultural-linguistic model could work together would be by taking on the painstaking task of learning one another’s cultural-linguistic systems. Most likely

this would take a lifetime, since most of the system is an unconscious competence. Even then there is no guarantee that such a procedure would lead anywhere.

This book has three major strengths: Since it is a general proposal, it gives the reader a bird's eye view of the concepts and issues at stake. In doing so it affirms the possibility of differences between various religions without discounting their value to one another or dissolving their differences into some lowest common denominator. Second, it provides a readily applicable means of adjudicating differences within a religious group, even providing for normative rules for articulating the faith. Third, it provides public access across the boundaries of major world religions.

A question arises from this discussion. To what degree is Lindbeck's proposal funded by a rather thoroughgoing skepticism regarding ontological truth claims and, as a result, the viability of Christian evangelical outreach? Or, to put it too strongly, does Lindbeck's proposal finally abet a sectarian retreat from the world?

This question regarding skepticism follows from Lindbeck's own argument. His rule theory of doctrine explains how two doctrinal systems, which say very different things about a doctrine, justification for example, can reconcile without capitulation. To make this argument, he uses the example of the rules "Drive on the left" and "Drive on the right," which "are unequivocal in meaning and unequivocally opposed, yet both may be binding: one in Britain and the other in the United States..." (18). Perhaps it is to place too much weight on this example, but are not both rules instances of several shared rules; for example, "Traffic needs to flow in opposite directions, in non-conflictive trajectories." And, at a level further removed, "We ought to drive so as not to harm our neighbor." Even if this example demonstrates the logical possibility of such a situation, does it necessarily follow that all doctrines fall within the logical category described within the conception of rule? And, even if doctrines can be reinterpreted as rules, does it exhaust the full extent or range of their referentiality? In other words, when I say, "Jesus Christ is Lord" am I *only* describing a cultural habit or rule for Christians? It is clearer to me now, having

read Lindbeck, that I am at least articulating an instance of Christological maximalism and historical particularity. But am I not also saying, "This is the way things are or might be, not only for Christians but the world"?

Lindbeck is attentive to this issue. His fourth chapter, "Many Religions and the One True Faith," addresses it. However, due to his scope and space, the depth of the discussion suffers. My remarks pursue the conversation rather than find fault with the argument.

Lindbeck first distinguishes between the "intrasystematic" and the "ontological" truths of statements. "The first is the truth of coherence; the second, the truth of correspondence to reality which, according to epistemological realists, is attributable to first-order propositions." A doctrine may be internally consistent but false. He recognizes the necessity of coherence in doctrine but also realizes the more imposing question is the one of ontological truth claims.

In his argument he turns to J. L. Austin's notion of a "performatory" use of language: "...a religious utterance, one might say, acquires the propositional truth of ontological correspondence only insofar as it is a performance, an act or deed, which helps create that correspondence." In short, propositional truth follows performance. "Jesus Christ is Lord" is not an ontological truth

claim “ unless I believe and act upon it appropriately. Our statement about Jesus “becomes a first-order proposition capable...of making ontological truth claims only as it is used in the activities of adoration, proclamation, obedience, promise-hearing, and promise-keeping which shape individuals and communities into conformity to the mind of Christ.” At this point, I would appreciate reading Lindbeck’s response to the subsequent conversation in this philosophical tradition on these questions; for example, S. Toulmin’s extensive discussion of the interplay of various language games in creating public languages. Toulmin even discusses this in relationship to theology. Or, to borrow a question from R. Bernstein: Lindbeck has avoided objectivism but is he caught in relativism? Is there no way beyond both objectivism and relativism?

Be that as it may, the result of Lindbeck’s proposal, in practical terms, is convenient for diplomatic relations among different Christian groups and Christianity and other religions. Unless a person has become a part of the cultural-linguistic system of, let’s say Lutheranism, one is not confronted with the ontological truth claims of the Lutheran doctrine of justification by faith alone. Or the Buddhist, who was not reared within latent Christianity and is uninterested in joining the Christian cultural-linguistic system, will never encounter the ontological truth claim that “Jesus Christ is Lord” no matter how many times I attempt to persuade her.

The choice left for the church over disagreements like the one over justification is to announce reconciliation without agreement. Apparently Lutherans cannot be persuaded by ontological truth claims about a Roman Catholic transformative doctrine of justification, since we cannot have them before us as ontological truth claims. I am not sure how Lindbeck accounts for Luther’s claim to correct the church catholic. Was he, in principle, wrong to do so? Can the church, in principle, be reformed; that is, admit error and deliberately change? How did Catholics, living in the same cultural-linguistic system, like Johann Eck and Martin Luther, disagree so profoundly?

Furthermore, if I understand the argument, the church catholic has little reason to evangelize. Lindbeck must be quoted at length on this topic:

The communication of the gospel is not a form of psycho-therapy, but rather the offer and the act of sharing one’s own beloved language—the language that speaks of Jesus Christ—with all those who are interested, in the full awareness that God does not call all to be part of the witnessing people. (61)

I am not sure what polemic Lindbeck is carrying on with his remarks regarding psycho-therapy but to my knowledge neither of his other models would, in principle, conceive of evangelism in such a manner. More importantly, what keeps Lindbeck’s model from understanding evangelism as a linguistic-behavioral modification program? I am not suggesting he supports this tactic, I only

wonder what prevents someone else from using Lindbeck’s profound skepticism regarding the place of persuasion in public religious discourse as the excuse for such programming.

In short, why should Christians bother to witness? Especially since Lindbeck argues in another place in the book, that God will give everyone a second chance to confess Christ on the other side of the grave. What prevents Christianity from retreating into its cultural enclaves and

preserving for ourselves this peculiar way of truth that cannot even be true unless you already believe and act on it?

During this past summer I joined a group of pastors to discuss this book. We found it provocative and in several instances helpful. Above all, it worked well for such a group conversation. I hope my comments encourage similar discussion groups.

Patrick Keifert

Luther Northwestern Seminary

St. Paul, Minnesota

A READER'S HEBREW-ENGLISH LEXICON OF THE OLD TESTAMENT, Vols. I-II, Genesis-2 Kings, by Terry Armstrong, Douglas Busby, and Cyril F. Carr. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1980, 1982. Pp. 240. \$13.95.

The occasion for this review is the reissue of the first two volumes of *A Reader's Hebrew-English Lexicon of the Old Testament* under a single cover. This "Hebrew Sakae Kubo" has proved to be as useful a tool for the Hebrew student as Kubo's *Reader's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* has been for the student of Greek.

Once a student has acquired a minimal working vocabulary and has been exposed to the vagaries of the Hebrew verbal system, it is time to begin a concentrated study of *how* the individual words of the sentence work together to provide meaning. One way to accomplish this task is for the student to read extensively in the Hebrew Bible and thus gain some "eyes on" experience of the language being the language.

Three problems present themselves at this point: 1. The standard lexicon, *Brown, Driver, Briggs*, is notoriously difficult to use at this elementary level, requiring much exasperating page-flipping and skimming through long discussions of verbal roots to discover the simple meaning of a noun derived from that root. 2. *BDB*'s rich exploration of the nuances of verbal roots in specific textual contexts can be quite bewildering to the student engaged in learning how to read the text. 3. The time spent moving from Bible to *BDB* and back again is responsible for much of the drudgery associated with this phase of language learning.

Of the spate of reference works designed to help the student "get into" *BDB*, Armstrong, Busby and Carr (*ABC*?) is easily the most useful. An appendix (211-230) lists the words that occur more than fifty times in the Hebrew Bible, along with brief definitions from *BDB*. Words that occur fifty times or less are listed verse by verse in the order of their appearance, thus obviating the need to look up unknown (or forgotten) puzzlers in the lexicon. All of this allows the student to concentrate on *reading* the text, i.e. struggling with *how* the words fit together. Of course, *ABC* is not intended as a substitute for the lexicons. Should one wish to consult *BDB*, however, *ABC* provides the reference.

For those who share the reviewer's opinion that extensive reading of the text is the best way to acquire (and rejuvenate?) the biblical languages, this book can make that task as easy as, well...*ABC*!

Mark A. Throntveit

Luther Northwestern Seminary

Saint Paul, Minnesota

A WAY IN THE WORLD: FAMILY LIFE AS SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE, by Ernest Boyer, Jr. San Francisco: Harper & Row, 1984. Pp. 193. \$12.95.

My quarrel with many of the books published to inspire and guide parents in their daily family life is that they drivel pieties that simply do not work in plain ordinary living. If they seek to satisfy the modern craving for instant uplift and to

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take parents to mountain tops of spiritual vision from which they are to bring new life to the family, they seem to forget the inevitable come-downance. Every rapture has its come-downance. Even Moses had his when his Israelite family all-too-humanly failed his God-given vision and guidance for their lives. It is to Scripture's credit that it honestly portrays Moses' lashing, smashing rage.

My long-standing frustration brought me already freighted with skepticism to Ernest Boyer's *A Way in the World*. But I was immediately disarmed in the introduction, where the author, married and the father of three children, tells of attending a lecture at Harvard Divinity School on the spirituality of the desert, on that life of solitude, prayer, and reflection that called men and women of the early Christian Church to the harsh Egyptian desert. The lecture ended, and the lecturer was putting away her notes. "Just one question," said Boyer. "Is there childcare in the desert?"

With this question Boyer plunges directly into the conflict between a parent's hungering and thirsting for the living God and his and her need to care for a family's hungers and thirsts; between a longing to live life on one's knees and the necessity of living it on one's feet; between the desire to be more than five percent of one's self and the fear of flunking ordinary living. Who of us has not compared the lives we live with the lives of saints and not felt guilt-smitten? Who of us has not rushed to his or her own defense: "But they, be they great saints of great works or great saints of solitude and prayer, *were not married!* They didn't have kids! They didn't have TV, telephones, tape cassettes, and all the crap with which we are saddled!"

Two ways of life. The life of the desert and the life of the family, or, as Boyer prefers to call them, life on the edge and life at the center. Can they ever be joined, really and truly be joined? Boyer believes that they can. Indeed, he believes that the life lived in the family is also a spiritual journey and spiritual discipline. In its plain ordinariness and everyday routines it has rich gifts to offer every member of the family. Before proceeding to name and discuss these gifts, Boyer—again in a way that disarms the champions of both camps—points out the radical differences and the dangers of the two ways of life. Both ways of life have their demons!

Judged against the values of the desert, families can seem uncommitted to God or to deeper issues. They seem materialistic, lethargic, caught up in minor details. And yet judged according to the values of the family, life lived on the edge appears unconcerned with human need, irresponsible, and self-absorbed. (29)

Having pointed out the dangers inherent in both ways of life, Boyer makes the audacious claim that "the spirituality of the family, of life at the center, is one of the most rigorous and most difficult, but it is also among the most rewarding and transforming of all the great spiritual

disciplines.” This he says of diapering babies, keeping toddlers in tow, toting adolescents, suffering teenagers! Without resorting to any of the conventional pious cliches or How-to gimmickry, Boyer proceeds to substantiate his claim in the chapters on “The Sacrament of the Care of Others” and “The Sacrament of the Routine: The Sacred in the Ordinary.” It is not a methodology that he presents but an illumination that reveals the Gospel truth that “an action is judged great according to the love with which it is performed and by nothing else.” He saves the truth from abstraction by the flesh and bone of narrative, deftly told. If in his drawing the two ways of life together he at times seems to be making contradictory statements, he soon makes it clear that they are not contradictions but paradoxes, crazy Christian paradoxes! Completely honest at all times, even when describing family life in established Christian communities, Boyer states that one who strives to join the two ways of life always feels off balance, “an inhabitant of two worlds, but a citizen of neither.”

And yet this sense of imbalance is part of the solution, not part of the problem, of joining the two ways of life. After all, you *are* living both. They *have* been brought together and the fact that they do not fit comfortably need not be taken as evidence of failure, but of the health of the struggle that refuses to let either one go. (127)

Edna H. Hong
Northfield, Minnesota

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DANIEL, by W. Sibley Towner. Atlanta: John Knox, 1984. Pp. 198. \$16.95.

The *Interpretation Bible Commentary* series is one which the pastors and teachers among *Word & World* readers should appreciate. Its purpose is rather comparable to but far more extensive than the Fortress Press *Proclamation* series. That is to help the preacher/teacher get at the message of whole Biblical books or sections of them. In this volume every pericope in Daniel is covered in a quite satisfactory way.

This series and Towner's volume in it may not provide one with all the information one might like to have for background or to answer technical or linguistic questions about the text. That is not the purpose. Commentaries which provide such information are already available, and the authors do not intend to merely repeat what has already been done (v). I think that means that they expect some of us to own another major work such as Montgomery, *I.C.C.* to fill in the desired information.

One is also expected to have at least the R.S.V. at one's side as one studies this volume. No translation is provided. That saves space and saved space means saved money, but the absence of the Biblical text does make using the book more awkward. One must keep two volumes (this one and an English Bible) or even three (the Hebrew-Aramaic Bible, too) before one on the desk while reading. That is surely no burden to anyone who has become serious enough about the task of interpretation to have gotten hold of this volume.

But for another reason, this reviewer would have appreciated a fresh translation by the author. Explaining and justifying his own translation would have forced Towner to enrich his

work with translation comments which are now kept to a minimum. Translating Daniel into English is not as simple as some readers of commentaries might suppose, and for those who do know that the task is demanding, a recounting of the difficulties encountered would be appreciated. After all, translation is interpretation. Wasn't it hard for the author to have to interpret someone else's interpretation (translation)? It seems the reviewer is arguing with the editors of the series who laid out the ground rules.

The editors disclaim imposing severe strictures upon the authors (v). We are genuinely appreciative of that, for it permits Towner to keep his introduction to a minimum (only 15 pages, while Joyce Baldwin used 75 out of a total of 210 in her work on Daniel). He then utilizes the space to better advantage on matters which the preacher/teacher will probably find more important. For example, there are 17 pages devoted to interpreting the important chapter 2 and 25 pages to chapter 7. Very little space is used merely recounting antiquities.

Our author first helps us understand what a given story or vision meant to the original readers of Daniel for whom it was written. Here it is the theological or religious message which is the focal point of the interpretation. The comments are done on the basis of the natural blocks of material in the text rather than verse by verse. This too is helpful since preachers rarely go through a text verse by verse in the sermon. It is rather the central theological focus of a pericope which engages preacher/teacher and congregation/class. Such theological sub-themes as are important enough to warrant comment are also included.

What other commentators and authors have to say is sometimes but not often mentioned (e.g., Hartman and DiLella on p. 167, and Montgomery, p. 163). Towner is his own person and it is not necessary for him to repeatedly reassure us that he has read the requisite literature. We can assume that and trust him to admit it when he feels genuinely indebted to or at odds with someone else. For example, he wants us to know that he disagrees with Montgomery's interpretation of Nebuchadnezzar's confession of faith in Daniel chapter 2 (44). Another thing he does is help us find relevant ancillary materials by culling out appropriate quotations from such widely differing works as Bonhoeffer's *Ethics* (43), the *Koran* (101), *The Rubaiyat* of Omar Khayyam (101), or Milton's *Paradise Lost* (172). We on our own very likely would not come upon or remember these engaging parallels or illustrations. There is also constant and

rich cross-referencing with other portions of Hebrew or New Testament scriptures as well as the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. The apocalypses found in the deuterio- or extra-canonical writings are especially important in interpreting the apocalyptic visions of Daniel, and Towner helps us to quickly find our way into the appropriate sections.

Professor Towner also gives adequate guidance and his own examples of contemporary exposition/application. He has provided a most satisfactory tool for use in preparing to teach Daniel or preach from one of its texts. He is deeply committed to the results and method of contemporary biblical studies, a factor which may be troublesome for conservative readers. He forthrightly states that the book is the work of several authors (5) none of whom is a sixth century Daniel. He likes the work of Paul Hanson who traces the origins of apocalyptic to postexilic, anti-priestly, disaffected disciples of Deutero-Isaiah (12). He dates the visions of Daniel to the crisis brought on by Antiochus IV's forced hellenization of his subjects including the Jews. He dismisses the idea that the book predicts twentieth century events or can be used to make time

charts of the end of time (3-4). With all these matters this reviewer is in basic accord, but it must be recognized that some readers will be put off or offended by them. That is a pity because this volume should be of considerable value to any modern preacher/teacher on a quest for meaning in Daniel.

An almost off-hand statement Towner makes in his introduction is of significance throughout his work. "But most of today's readers of the book (Daniel) are not members of a tiny persecuted minority struggling to survive in the face of an imperial policy committed to eliminating all non-conforming sects and to destroying the religion of Judaism itself" (2). Aware of this major disjuncture between us and the original readers, Towner goes on to interpret Daniel for mainline Christians who belong to majorities and to wealthy, powerful establishments. That helps to make his applications useful to the majority of preachers/teachers of the western world.

These applications tend to be found in but are not exclusively limited to the section at the end of each chapter entitled "A Theological Assessment of Daniel chapter x." This section in particular provides help for anyone who is seeking to make sense of Daniel in our day. Of course, the same can be said for works like that of Joyce Baldwin in the *Tyndale* series. Hers is written from a more conservative point of view, but I would suspect that Towner, just because he pays such constant attention to his hermeneutical task, would provide more concrete help to even the conservative preacher/teacher than does Baldwin. After all, is the main task of proclamation to be able to announce that one has marshalled one more interpreter, and even a modern one, who accepts the early dating of Daniel?

Wendell W. Frerichs
Luther Northwestern Seminary
St. Paul, Minnesota